

DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

A Warning in Regard to *The Stone Money of Yap*

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I write to call the attention of readers of this journal to (1) an inexcusable error of fact, (2) an inexcusable publication, and (3) what I feel is a piece of extraordinarily poor scholarship. Since the explication of item (3) would constitute a sort of book review I will not expand on that point.

(1) On page 52 of *The Stone Money of Yap: A Numismatic Survey* by Cora Lee C. Gilliland, which is published as Smithsonian Studies in History and Technology 23 (1975), there is an entry labeled item 127 that indicates that I have in my possession a piece of *rai* from the island of Yap. It is indicated that this piece of *rai* was sold to me, that the sale was registered on 28 August, 1968, that the piece of *rai* has a diameter of 18 inches (or 45.8 cm.), and that its value at the time of acquisition was \$63.00.

This is not true. I do not possess a piece of *rai*. This is not an inconsequential detail and approaches what I consider to be a libel. The fact could easily have been established had the author simply checked by writing to me at the address which is printed and is my correct address.

I have long held the view that the antiquities of a country should not be removed from that country overtly or covertly. Even when the country itself is willing, for whatever reason, to license the export of such objects, they should not be held by private individuals but only by institutions of higher learning or museums where they can be openly available for scholarly study. The *rai*, *gau*, *yar*, and *churrua* of Yap are prime examples of such antiquities.

It is possible that such a sale could actually have been registered in my name since I was on Yap in August of 1968 and at that time a group of friends said that they would like to present me with a *rai*. I dissuaded them, however, from this very kind gesture and I never took possession of (nor did I even see) the piece of *rai* that they may have selected, if they actually did select a piece. If a certificate of sale was made out and registered, it should never have been

registered in my name since I did not buy, nor attempt to buy, the object. If a *rai* was in fact removed from Yap with a certificate bearing my name, it was done fraudulently.

The only thing which I have in my possession which even remotely resembles a *rai* is a machine-made replica about 5 cm. (2 in.) across, made from a chip of a large *rai* which the Japanese had deliberately smashed. The replica was regarded as trash by the young men who made it on the machine grinders in the motor pool in 1948.

(2) I feel that this publication is inexcusable for it appears under the imprimatur of the Smithsonian Institution and it provides a list of those pieces of *rai* held not only by universities and museums, but also by private persons. What is particularly inexcusable is that the selling and buying prices of many of these pieces, particularly those in private hands, are given. It thus becomes an informal, if nonetheless effective, standard of monetary value for collectors and buyers of what I think are and should be considered to be illegally held antiquities. In other words, the export of *rai* or any other of the antiquities of Yap should not be encouraged, and this monograph tends to do just that by providing a sort of standard for the dollar values of these objects.

The traffic in such antiquities, be they of Yap or Mexico or anywhere else, is contrary to the resolutions of the American Anthropological Association and all other professional associations with which I am familiar. That the Smithsonian's Museum of History and Technology chooses in this way to encourage an activity which the rest of the scholarly world rejects does not cast credit on that museum.

(3) I will not undertake a book review here. Suffice it to say that traditional Yap does not have "money" in any technical sense of the word. None of the objects listed on page 1, like *yar*, *gau*, *ma*, or *mbul*, are money in any proper sense. It is certainly true that *rai* has been called "stone money" and that the literature which is cited (all of which is very far out-of-date) calls it "money." And indeed, the Yapese themselves call *rai* "stone money." But to call a "cow" a "dog" does not make the cow a dog. Even if the traditional European name of the object called *rai* is "stone money," the most rudimentary scholarship could have

established that it is not money. It is thus entirely unsuitable as an object of numismatic study. The monograph thus has the effect of perpetuating the nonsense that traditional Yap had "money." All Gilliland had to do was to communicate with any of the anthropologists who have worked on Yap to find out what she needed to know. She could have written to Sherwood Lingenfelter, David Labby, John Kirkpatrick, Charles Broder, or myself, among others. Surely she could have sought some professional advice in the Smithsonian before publishing this travesty which only blemishes the good name of the Smithsonian Institution.

I feel that the Smithsonian's Museum of History and Technology should withdraw this publication, and stop its circulation. Also, the attention of the Museum should be drawn to the problem of encouraging the improper traffic in antiquities.

Addendum: After the above was written, I received a letter from the District Administrator of Yap confirming the fact that I did not purchase, nor was I given, nor do I now own the *rai* which Mrs. Gilliland wrote that I had. The District Administrator of Yap sent a copy of this letter to Mrs. Gilliland on 2 October 1976.

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An Answer to David M. Schneider's Remarks Concerning *The Stone Money of Yap* *A Numismatic Survey*

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In his remarks Professor Schneider says some rather harsh things about me and my recent publication to which I would like to respond.

First, Schneider objects vehemently to the presence of his name in the table listing privately owned *rai* (p. 52). In the preface of my work I stated that "the private owners were either contacted personally or the data employed was obtained from the Yap District Administrator's file on stone money." In this instance my source was the Yap District Administrator's file. If Schneider disagrees with this information he may wish

to contact the Yap District Government and request that the entry be deleted. In the interval, the fact remains that his name is publicly registered in the Yap Government official records as the recipient of a piece of *rai*.

I agree fully with Schneider that antiquities and artifacts should not be exported from Yap or any other similar area. Since going to Micronesia, where I lived an aggregate of seven years, I have been concerned about exported artifacts that ultimately reside in attics and back yards. These should have remained in the islands as a part of the cultural heritage. The facts are, however, that artifacts including *rai* have been and are being exported. Many pieces are being sold for dollars on Yap and some pieces are being sold in numismatic markets. To pretend that these exports and sales do not take place, in my view, promotes rather than impedes the practice. My very purpose in publishing acquisition data of the *rai* was to air the subject. Locating *rai* outside Yap is a beginning point in the historical care and recording of these antiquities. I hope that such a listing will spur private owners of alienated *rai* to donate them to museums, thus saving them from destruction and loss or from attics and auctions in some succeeding generation. I did not in my opinion "provide a sort of standard for the dollar value of these objects." My table clearly states that the column refers to the reported "value at time of acquisition," be that 1890, 1930, or 1970. Further, I cited these reported values as they were recorded in Danish crowns, Swiss francs, Dutch florins, German marks, or Japanese yen, as well as U.S. dollars. To avoid this when dealing with the changing concepts caused by the invasion of the foreigner is to deny historical fact. Because of the great discrepancy between acquisition values as well as dates of acquisition this could not be used as "a sort of standard dollar value of these objects." If any one has sought to establish a standard of value for *rai* it has been the Yapese Legislature acting as representatives of the people in a modernizing society.

Schneider states "that traditional Yap does not have 'money' in any technical sense of the word . . . It is thus entirely unsuitable as an object of numismatic study." He is a distinguished anthropologist known for his work on kinship and social organization. He has postulated a definition of "money" I know not whether exclusively his or one generally accepted by his discipline. For my part I am a historian, not an anthropologist, and as stated in the title and introduction of my work I take a numismatic view. Schneider's definition of the English word